WHAT IS CLAIMED IS

1.   A method of navigating a business application software using a computer system having a central processing unit, a display device coupled to said central processing unit, and a transactional database containing business information according to the dimensions of Items, People, Actions and Time, said method comprising:

simultaneously displaying icons on said display device separately representing the categories of Items, People, Actions, and Results;

accessing through any of said icons information contained in the software application or said database which is related to the category represented by said any icon; and

displaying the accessed information via a screen display specific to the said any icon.

2.   A method according to claim 1 wherein said icons are displayed on a substantially continuous basis.

3.   A method according to claim 1 comprising accessing and/or altering through the Items icon any information contained in the software application or said database which is related to selected physical or non-physical elements, including but not limited to products, parts, assets, services and other physical or non-physical resources.

4.   A method according to claim 1, comprising accessing and/or altering through the People icon any information contained in the software application or said database which is related to real people, including but not limited to

APPS-02

customers, prospects, vendors, suppliers, employees, contractors, or transportation agents.

5.   A method according to claim 1, comprising accessing and/or altering through the Actions icon any information contained in the software application or its database which is related to activities performed within an organization or between the organization and its external business partners, including but not limited to quotations, orders, picks, invoices, credit checks, and return authorizations.

6.   A method according to claim 1, comprising accessing through the Results icon summaries of data contained in the software application or its database, whether in graphical, tabular or text form, whether on screen, on a file, or in print.

7.   A method of simplifying interaction between a user and a computer system having a central processing unit coupled to a display device and a transactional database containing data representative of the dimensions items, people, actions and time, said method comprising:

simultaneously displaying icons on said display device representing items, people, actions, and results;

accessing and/or altering through any of said icons any data contained in the database which is related to the dimensions represented by said any icon; and

displaying the accessed and altered data via a screen display specific to the dimension identified by said any icon.

8.   An information handling apparatus comprising:

APPS-02

a computer system having a central processing unit and a display device coupled to said central processing unit;

a transactional database containing, on a line item basis, data in at least the following dimensions: items, people, actions and time; and

a graphical user interface coupled to said computer system comprising (a) means for causing said display device to display icons representing the dimensions of items, people, actions and results, (b) means for accessing through any one of said icons data contained in said database, and (c) means for managing the accessed data according to algorithms contained in the software and workflows defined by the user..

9.   An information handling apparatus comprising:

a computer system having a central processing unit and a display device coupled to said central processing unit;

a transactional database containing, on a line item basis, data in at least the following dimensions: items, people, actions and time; and

a graphical user interface coupled to said computer system comprising (a) means for causing said display device to display icons representing the dimensions of items, people, actions and results, and (b) means operative through selection of any of said icons for accessing data contained in said database and managing the accessed data according to specific workflows related to the dimension represented by said any icon.

10.   An information handling apparatus comprising:

a central processing unit;

a display device coupled to said central processing unit;

a transactional data base coupled to said central processing unit for storing data relating to at least items, people, actions and time on a line item basis;

software defining a scheme for managing and processing said data and for generating results according to selected workflows; and

a graphical user interface characterized by (1) means for causing said displace device to display separate icons as metaphors for items, people, actions and results and to generate separate screens for use in accessing and processing data on the basis of items, people, actions and results, and (2) means for causing said software to display data according to said scheme on the basis of items, people, actions or results,

11. An information handling apparatus comprising:

a computer system having a central processing unit and a display device coupled to said central processing unit;

a transactional database containing, on a line item basis, data in at least the following dimensions: items, people, actions and time; and

a graphical user interface coupled to said computer system comprising (a) means for causing said display device to display icons representing items, people, actions and results, and (b) means responsive to selection of any of said icons for accessing specific software and managing and processing data contained in said database according to said accessed specific software.

12. An information handling apparatus according to claim 11 wherein said specific software defines a workflow.

13. An information handling apparatus according to claim 12 wherein said specific software comprises a first database table that defines types of

actions to be executed by said computer system and a second database table that defines possible links between said action types.

14. An information handling apparatus according to claim 13 wherein said specific software comprises a third database table that contains a record of links between actions that have been executed or are planned for execution.

15. An information handling apparatus comprising:

a computer system having a central processing unit and a display device coupled to said central processing unit;

a transactional database containing, on a line item basis, data in at least the following dimensions: items, people, actions and time; and

a graphical user interface coupled to said computer system comprising (a) means for causing said display device to display icons representing items, people, actions and results, and (b) software defining a schema for managing data contained in said database according to specific workflows accessed by selection of one of said icons.

16. A graphical user interface for accessing data stored in a computer system that includes a display device, said interface comprising (a) means for causing said display device to display icons representing the dimensions of items, people, actions and results, (b) means for accessing through any one of said icons data contained in said database, and (c) means for managing the accessed data.

17. A graphical user interface according to claim 16 wherein said graphical user interface is adapted to provide four separate screens, one each for

Items, People, Actions and Results, with each of said screens displaying all of said icons.

18.   A graphical user interface according to claim 17 wherein each of said

5   screens includes one or more tabs or buttons that represent options available to the user with respect to accessing or processing data.

19.   An information handling apparatus comprising:

a computer system having a central processing unit and a display

10   device coupled to said central processing unit;

a transactional database containing, on a line item basis, data in at least the following dimensions: items, people, actions and time; and

a schema involving user-defined actions and links between actions for managing data contained in said database according to specific workflows.

15

20.   A method of defining a workflow in a computer system comprising establishing a first database table that lists and defines different action types a second database table that lists and defines possible links between action types, and a third database table that maintains a record of the links between

20   actual actions as they have occurred or as they are planned to occur.

21.   A method according to claim 20 wherein said links establish the order of executing selected actions and/or the conditions to be met for an action to be executed.

25

22.   A method according to claim 20 wherein said action types include a purchase requisition action and a purchase order action, and said second database table contains a link between said purchase requisition action and

said purchase order action that establishes the order of executing those actions.

23.   A method according to claim 20 wherein said action types include a customer order action, an approved acceptance of order action, an issue shipping order action, and an issue invoice action, and said second database table contains separate and specific links between action types that establish the order of executing said action types and/or the conditions to be met for each action type to be executed.

APPS-02